

**Opening Statement of Chairman Jim Jordan**  
**Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Job Creation and Regulatory Affairs**  
**“Sequestration Oversight: Understanding the Administration’s Decisions on Spending**  
**Cuts and Furloughs”**  
**March 19, 2013**

Today’s hearing will compare the reality of sequestration with the inflammatory rhetoric coming out of the White House. The Obama Administration mislead the American people with horror story after horror story about the sequester. First, Education Secretary Arne Duncan went on national television and claimed that teachers were literally getting pink slips. The *Washington Post* later awarded him “Four Pinocchio’s” for his claim.

Next, President Obama claimed that janitors at the U.S. Capitol would receive a pay cut. The *Washington Post* awarded the President “Four Pinocchio’s” for that claim as well. Even worse, the President’s statement prompted the superintendent of the U.S. Capitol building to email his staff to reassure them that this was not, in fact, the case.

Now, newspapers are running stories about the Administration’s smoke and mirrors. A *Politico* headline asked “Did President Obama cry wolf about the sequester?” The answer was a pretty resounding yes and included criticism from, among others, former Democratic Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell.

*The Chicago Tribune* ran an editorial last week entitled, “Truth-squadding sequester hysteria: Officials sabotage themselves when they manipulate, exaggerate and flout common sense.” It featured pictures of children unable to tour the White House holding up signs that said “The White House is Our house, Please Let Us Visit!”

What’s next? Is the President going to cancel the White House Easter Egg roll?

The USDA and the Department of Commerce are also partaking in the doomsday rhetoric. In mid-December of last year, Agriculture Secretary Vilsack issued a memo downplaying the possibility of the sequester and informed his staff that should it occur, USDA “*may* have to consider furloughs.” Then, just a little over a month later, Secretary Vilsack changed his tune, declaring that USDA would have to furlough over 6,000 food inspectors for two to three weeks. He recently walked back that statement, saying USDA would not see continuous furloughs. So which is it?

The Department of Commerce said it would furlough up to 2,600 employees at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); yet, at the same time it is advertising job openings at NOAA, and it was hit with an IG audit that found NOAA paid out more than \$40 million in contracts without proper justification.

Finally, let me express my disappointment with the extraordinary amount of effort it took to get the Department of Commerce and USDA to testify today. Despite multiple offers by the Committee to move the hearing date to accommodate these agencies and the willingness of the Committee to accept several different alternative witnesses from each agency, the Committee

ultimately had to threaten to use subpoenas to secure their testimony. Both agencies used delay tactics and appeared to play games with the Committee in an effort to avoid testifying. Even after finally agreeing to testify, the Department of Commerce notified the Committee that it is doing so quote, “reluctantly”.

The American people have heard one dire warning after another about the impact of the sequester on their lives; yet, when it comes to accountability and answering simple questions about what agencies are doing with the American people’s money, they throw up one road block after another. This issue has been at the forefront of the news for months; therefore, the agencies should have been planning for months, and it is inexcusable agencies would not have multiple people ready and available to talk about it.

The American people have a right to know why they continue to be misled by this Administration in an effort to score cheap political points. They deserve truthful and accurate answers – not more misleading rhetoric – and we hope to get the American people these answers today.